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See page 33



Lynx: The Comeback Cat

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Wii

NINTENDO DS

THQ

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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS (ISSN 1542-3042) is published ten times a year by the National Geographic Society, Washington, DC 20036. Periodical postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS, P.O. Box 63002, Tampa, FL 33663-3002. Subscriptions: United States, \$19.95; Canada, \$35.95; in Canadian dollars or \$26.00 in U.S. funds; elsewhere, \$29.95 in U.S. funds, United States and its outlying areas, \$34.00 for two years, Canada, \$55.95 in Canadian funds or \$42.95 in U.S. funds; single copy: United States, \$4.99; Canada, \$6.99 in Canadian funds or \$5.75 in U.S. funds; elsewhere, \$5.99 in U.S. funds or equivalent (includes postage). In Canada, Agreement number: 960649, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS, P.O. Box 4412 STA A, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3N2.

The submission of photographs and other material to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS is done at the risk of the sender. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS cannot accept liability for loss or damage.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS magazine's numerous honors include: *EPHES 2005* and *2006* Periodical of the Year; a Golden Laurel Award; a Parents' Choice Gold Award; a Parent's Guide Children's Media award; the Folio: Editorial Excellence Award; and an Ozzie Award for Design Excellence.

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On the Cover

A lynx's big paws act as natural snowshoes in wintry terrain.

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BY MARILYN TERRELL

Check out these 9 outrageous facts.



About 12,000 animal crackers are created every minute.

The largest salamanders can grow as long as bicycles.



Your brain uses the same amount of power as a ten-watt lightbulb.



Apes laugh when tickled.



DAYS WERE ONLY 18 HOURS LONG A BILLION YEARS AGO.

The record for the highest jump by a pig is 27.5 inches — that's the height of a St. Bernard!



THE LARGEST HURRICANES CAN MEASURE

TEN MILES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

THERE ARE MORE TEXT MESSAGES SENT EACH DAY THAN THERE ARE PEOPLE ON EARTH.

Your ears produce more wax when you're afraid.



Wish List

'Tis the season that wishes come true! When making your Wish List this year, don't miss these must-haves of the season.



ARM & HAMMER® SPINBRUSH® THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN® COMBO PACK WITH AIM® BUBBLE BERRY TOOTHPASTE
Kids brush 38% longer with ARM & HAMMER® Spinbrush® than when using an ordinary manual brush. The Amazing Spider-Man® combo pack includes one ARM & HAMMER® Spinbrush® battery-operated toothbrush and one tube of Aim® Bubble Berry kids' toothpaste.

THE BACKYARDIGANS FOR NINTENDO DS

It's Imagination Time! Join your backyard friends on a musical adventure as they search for pirate-y treasures, capture yucky villains, and blast into outer space!



POKÉMON TRADING CARD GAME: PLATINUM—ARCEUS

Arceus. A new Pokémon so mighty that legend says it shaped the Pokémon Universe. Introducing Pokémon Trading Card Game: Platinum—Arceus.

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NI HAOK, KAI-LAN SUPER GAME DAY FOR WII & NI HAOK, KAI-LAN NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION FOR NINTENDO DS

Play along with Kai-lan and friends in all sorts of super exciting games in Super Game Day and prepare for the big festivities in New Year's Celebration.

DORA CRYSTAL KINGDOM FOR NINTENDO WII AND DORA PUPPY FOR NINTENDO DS

Double your Dora adventure with Dora Puppy for Nintendo DS and Dora Saves the Crystal Kingdom for Wii! Ready to play? ¡Vamos a jugar!



YOU CAN WIN!
You may be one of 10 lucky winners randomly selected to win items featured on this Wish List. Just send us your name, age, date of birth, address, telephone, and a parent/guardian signature. Mail your entry to:
**NG KIDS WISH LIST
1165 17TH STREET NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20036**
Entries must be postmarked by January 31, 2010. See official rules at left.

ASTONISHING
STORIES FROM
THE FILES OF

Guinness World Records

BY KRISTIN HUNT



Find out about other amazing records in the new book *Guinness World Records 2010*.

JUMPING DOG

Dogs love to leap for balls and treats, but over a jump rope? Sweet Pea the border collie mix skipped 75 times over a jump rope—the most skips by a dog in one minute. To teach her the trick, owner Alex Rothacker stood Sweet Pea on a pedestal and slowly moved a stick under her feet so she'd step over it. Eventually the steps became jumps. Turns out Sweet Pea is multitasked. She can also jump rope with two kids.



MARILYN MACKECHNE / GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS SWEET PEA © GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS LIMITED (BOOK, SOLUS, T-SHIRTS INFORMATION PROVIDED BY © 2009 GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS LIMITED)

GIANT GNOME



Solus the garden gnome is a little big to stand in a flower bed. In fact, he's about as tall as a giraffe! At 17 feet 8 inches, Solus is the largest garden gnome on record. After two months of building the statue, people were ready to celebrate. So about 1,000 kids—all dressed as gnomes—marched over to the amusement park in Poland where Solus now stands.



LOTS OF T-SHIRTS!

Talk about a layered look. Jef van Dijk holds the record for the most T-shirts worn at once: 227. That's about 165 pounds' worth! The stunt took a lot longer than getting dressed in the morning. A friend pulled the T-shirts—from medium size to very large—over van Dijk's head for about four hours.

COOL inventions

BY CATHY LU

SPACESHIP FOR TOURISTS

Prepare for liftoff! In the near future, you could be rocketing out of this world on Virgin Galactic's

SpaceShip Two shuttle, the first to offer tourist trips to outer space. Leaving from a spaceport in

New Mexico, an aircraft called the WhiteKnight Two will carry SpaceShip Two on its belly, taking off like a plane and climbing to 50,000 feet.

At this height, the spaceship will drop off, turn upward, and zoom into space at a blazing 3,000 miles an hour.

Once you reach the starry blackness, you'll be able to see the curvature of the Earth below while you float weightless through the cabin. After hurtling in orbit for a while, the spaceship will turn and head back to Earth, touching down like a regular plane. It'll be a two-hour adventure of a lifetime.



SPY PHONE



Even if you're not quite ready to join the CIA or Secret Service, you can still feel as stealthy as a spy. The MW2 is a watch that doubles as a cell phone. When you need to make a call—whether to phone in an important clue, or just to complain about your little brother's latest antics—simply dial the number on the MW2's keypad (or use the onscreen buttons), slyly lift your hand toward your mouth, and start talking. Your subjects will never know you're on the phone at all. They'll just think you're checking the time.



VIRTUAL RACE

Want to feel what it's like to speed around the track at the Indy 500? Here's your chance. The HotSeat Racer hooks up to any video game console so you can play your favorite driving game. But instead of sitting on the floor of your bedroom with a boring old controller, the HotSeat parks you in a car-like chair, with steering wheel and pedals positioned in front

of you like a real race car. A big screen provides a lifelike view of the road while six speakers surround you with car sounds, from engine revs to tire squeals. The seat doesn't move, but the experience seems so real that you'll find yourself leaning into turns and jerking suddenly when you slam on the brakes to avoid a colossal crash.



Naughty PETS

CAUGHT
ON CAMERA

THE TUNA I
ADDED TO THIS
TEA MAKES IT
VERY TASTY.

NAME Bella

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Fishing at teatime

FAVORITE TOY
Squiggly rubber
worm bait

PET PEEVE Coffee



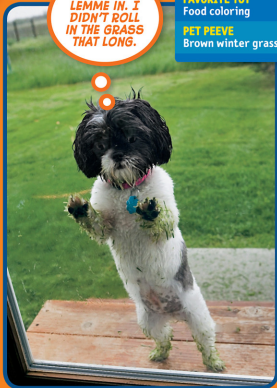
C'MON,
LEMME IN. I
DIDN'T ROLL
IN THE GRASS
THAT LONG.

NAME Ed

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Dyeing his fur green
with grass stains

FAVORITE TOY
Food coloring

PET PEEVE
Brown winter grass



THIS
WIG LOOKS
BETTER ON ME
THAN ON MY
OWNER.

NAME Schwan

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Stealing hairpieces

FAVORITE TOY
Wig
boxes to hide his
stash—and himself

PET PEEVE
Shampoos



IT'S SO
FUNNY WHEN
THEY THINK I'M
LOST IN THE
COUCH.

NAME Cullen

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Playing hide-and-seek
without his owners
knowing it

FAVORITE TOY
Toilet paper tube to
nibble holes in

PET PEEVE
Locked cage



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JENNIFER B. JORDAN / PHOTO LIBRARY (CULLEN)

Double The Dora Adventure!

Dora loves her puppy, Perrito. Help her feed him, bathe him, and dress him up. You can also teach Perrito to sit, jump, speak, fetch and try to win a trophy in the Big Puppy Competition. ¡Vamos a jugar! Let's play!



Wii

NINTENDO DS

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Help Dora and friends bring color back to the world. Fly with butterfly wings, perform tricks with a magical wand, and bounce off sparkling crystals. You can even play as Boots for the very first time! ¡Vámonos! Let's go!

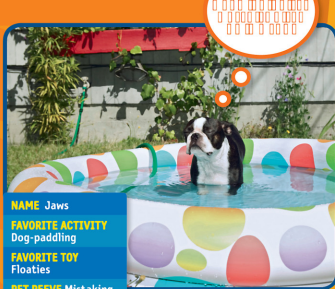


NAME Ito

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Clicking the "Buy Now" button

FAVORITE TOY
Mouse

PET PEEVE
Low battery power



NAME Jaws

FAVORITE ACTIVITY
Dog-paddling

FAVORITE TOY
Floaties

PET PEEVE Mistaking his inflatable pool for a chew toy

Bet you
**didn't
know**

BY KRISTIN HUNT

11

*frrr-*ozen facts to keep **you cool**

1

The largest **frozen smoothie** on record was more than 195 gallons—enough to fill **4 bathtubs.**

2

You can call home from an **ice telephone booth** at a festival in **Alaska.**

3

8,962 people **made snow angels** at the same time on the grounds of the **North Dakota State Capitol.**

4

Small **icebergs** are called **growlers** and **bergie bits.**

5

There have been at least **four major ice ages** in Earth's history.

6

Couples in Finland can get **married** in a **chapel** built out of **snow.**

7

Nomads created **ice skates** made of **bone** at least **4,000** years ago.

Play along with Kai-Ian and Friends!

Ready for a super celebration?

Join Kai-Ian, Yeye and friends as they prepare for Chinese New Year! You'll help create colorful lanterns, cook yummy dumplings, march in a dragon parade, and put on an exciting fireworks show!



It's super game day!

Get ready to play with Kai-Ian and friends in all sorts of super exciting games! You'll get to race to the finish line in a dragon boat, pop colorful bubbles, and more until Mr. Sun goes to sleep!



Wii

NINTENDOS DS

NICKELODEON



BLACK LANTERN STUDIOS, INC.



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8 Antarctica is a **desert**, even though it's covered mostly in **ice**.

9 The **biggest** snowstorm dropped almost **16 feet** of snow—enough to bury the **basketball hoop** at an NBA game.

10 The **lowest** known **Arctic** temperature is **-90°F**.

11 **Magnetic** compasses don't point **north** at the North Pole.

Stupid Criminals

BY ELISABETH DEFFNER

BUSTED!



In the Doghouse

SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA

Some people never learn. A man who was out on bail for stealing a car drove to the courthouse—in another stolen car! How he got caught was even more stupid: The man left seven dogs in the SUV with the back door open, and some jumped out and started running around the parking lot. Someone called the sheriff's department, who called in the license plate on the crook's car. That's when they discovered it was stolen. Worried about his dogs, the bad guy ran out and asked the police if everything was OK. The dogs? Yes. The guy? No. He's in jail. "This is a perfect example of how truth is sometimes funnier than fiction," says Deputy District Attorney Aicha Mieviss.



Dumb, Dumber, and Dumbest

BOSSIER CITY, LOUISIANA

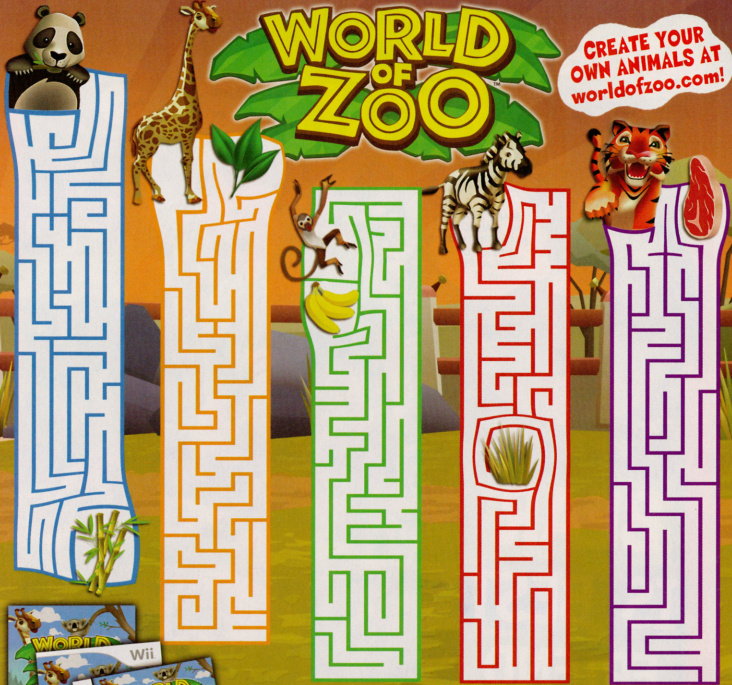
Crime doesn't pay—especially when a thief leaves her purse at the scene. After eating at a Mexican restaurant, four young women took off without paying for their food—and without the purse that belonged to one of them. When officers arrived at the restaurant, they got the name and photo of one of the thieves from the driver's license in the purse. That made it easy to recognize her when she and her pals returned to fetch the forgotten handbag. Guess they were too dumb to notice the police, who were still at the restaurant.



Hiding in Plain Sight

CHALMETTE, LOUISIANA

Hint to thieves: Don't use stolen property to hide stolen property. A family returned home one day to find that their apartment had been robbed. Even their dog's distinctive blue blanket was missing. So of course, when the family spotted the blanket hanging in their neighbors' window, they had a good idea who stole their stuff. Police searched the apartment and found clothing and electronics that belonged to the victims. "The crooks were using the blanket as a curtain to hide the stolen property," says Sgt. Jeff Vega. "It was pretty ridiculous."



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Earn awards to unlock over 600 items!

Amazing Animals

CASEY ANDERSON PLAYS WITH HIS BEST FRIEND, BRUTUS.

Go online for more fun information about Brutus!
natgeotv.com/grizzly

MAKE SURE MY SALMON SMOOTHIE HAS A SLICE OF PINEAPPLE IN IT.



BEAR IS BEST FRIEND

Bozeman, Montana

What do you call a bear that swims in your pool, eats at your table, and steals your hat? If you're Casey Anderson, you call him Brutus—and your best friend.

Anderson adopted the orphaned bear when Brutus was still small enough to fit in his hand. Growing up in Anderson's home, the cub would drink from baby bottles, sleep in a laundry basket, and sprawl out in front of the TV. When Brutus grew too big for the house, Anderson created Montana Grizzly Encounter, a three-acre bear sanctuary.

At the sanctuary, Anderson and Brutus educate visitors about how special bears are—and why they need to be protected. Brutus may be a teacher, but that doesn't mean he's not naughty. "We have a pond that feeds a waterfall through a pipe, and sometimes Brutus will put his paw over the pipe to stop the water," Anderson says. "When the other bears investigate, he takes his paw away and totally drenches them!"

—Kitson Jazyka

BRUTUS AND FRIENDS SHARE DINNER.



BUTTERFLY GETS SPLINTS

Lake Luzerne, New York

The monarch butterfly fluttered helplessly on the roadside. It had been hit by a car and broke its wing. Luckily, Jeannette Brandt spotted the creature while riding her bike and took it home.

Watching a how-to video, Brandt glued two tiny cardboard splints over the monarch's broken wing. For ten days, Brandt fed the butterfly water and mushy pear. "It ate off my hand," she says. "It seemed grateful for the help."

But one challenge remained: migration. "Monarchs winter in Mexico each year," says Chris Singer, founder of the Live Monarch Foundation. But Mexico was 3,000 miles away from New York, and it was now too cold for the butterfly to begin its journey. So nestled in a shoebox, the butterfly hitched a ride with a southbound trucker. The trucker released it in Florida, where, perhaps with a wave of its splinted wing, the small survivor took flight.

—Aline Alexander Newman



I WISH THERE WERE ROOM FOR SOMEONE TO SIGN MY SPLINTS.

OCTOPUS SQUEEZES INTO BOX



Boston, Massachusetts

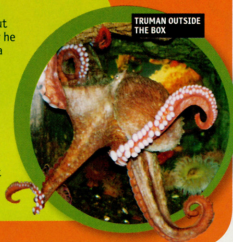
Truman the octopus can stretch out more than seven feet. But recently he squeezed through a tiny hole into a 14-inch cube, just to get a snack!

New England Aquarium workers had locked a tasty crab in a small box, which they put inside another cube. Truman was supposed to simply unlock his snack. Instead, he stuck one arm through a three-inch crack. Then another. Slowly,

"Octopus bodies are boneless," biologist Bill Murphy says. "They can squeeze through any space their beaks fit through."

Good thing for Truman he didn't have a bigger beak.

—Heather E. Schwartz



TRUMAN OUTSIDE THE BOX

green scene

BY KRISTIN HUNT

SHAKE

IN THE NEW YEAR!

New Year's Eve is fun, but don't be an environmental party pooper when you celebrate. All those disposable party plates, napkins, and decorations go straight from your overflowing trash can into landfills. So celebrate the New Year and the planet by throwing an Earth-friendly party. Then ring in 2010 with a recycled noisemaker you can create using items around your house.

WHAT TO DO

- 1 Place the paper around the open container and cut to fit around the outside of it.
- 2 Write "Happy New Year!" and "2010" on the paper. Then decorate it with stickers, markers, and magazine cutouts.
- 3 Glue or tape the paper to the container.
- 4 Attach ribbons or streamers to the lid of the container for some extra decoration.
- 5 Partially fill the container with small objects from the list (above, right). Put on the lid and tape it securely in place. Then get shakin'!

YOU WILL NEED

a recyclable jar or container with lid
scissors
old newspaper, leftover wrapping paper, or scrap construction paper
stickers, markers, or magazine cutouts
glue or tape
small objects such as keys, bottle caps, marbles, or dried beans or corn kernels
ribbons or streamers (optional)

ECO-PARTY TIPS

Drink sparkling cider from glasses instead of disposable cups.

Hang biodegradable crepe paper streamers around your house.

Trade fluorescent party lights for energy-efficient LED lights.

Encourage your friends to share rides to your New Year's Eve party.

Make a New Year's resolution to be more eco-conscious in 2010.

For more about helping the Earth, read our blog.
kidsblogs.nationalgeographic.com/greenscene

Look Who Saw the Bigger Picture

Here are the winners!

Thousands of fantastic entries... a world of amazing subjects... eight winning shots... one huge understanding of biodiversity... check out the winners of *The Green Wave* photography contest.



International winner 'Dominican Lizard'

"3 colors (in 1), 2 plants, 1 life. I took this in my back yard!"
Chad Nelson, age 12, Dominican Republic

International winner 'Spirit of the Bottle'

"Most of the people are careless and they throw all kind of trash all over the place, awful! However, this animal is a really clever one, it benefits this trash quite nifty. It has made its home in to this bottle top!"
Alex Marttunen, age 11, Finland



International winner 'Macroworld'

"Macroworld is the most interesting subject of photos. We can find there the best specimens. In this picture we can see a sleepy fly with lots of drops!"
Patryk Majchrzak, age 16, Poland



USA & Canada winner 'Banana Slug Dining'

"This banana slug was at our campsite in Redwood National Park. They are important to the environment as they eat decomposing material (and raspberries!) and help to fertilize the soil!"
Anthony Avellano, age 12, USA



Airbus winner 'Lovely Ladybug'

"This year we had an unusual abundance of ladybugs, which shows how sensitive the population reacts to changes of the environment!"

by **Julia Kresse, age 15, Germany**



Airbus winner 'Orang Utan'

"The baby of Orang Utan is hungry and needs love!"

by **Vinzent Raintung, age 8, Germany**



Airbus winner

'Shargacucullia Lychnitis'

"We were walking in Aveyron when we saw this. My dad had to hold the flower for me to take the photo because of the wind!"

by **Clémence Bonnefous, age 8, France**

See the bigger picture yourself. The lucky winners are visiting the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C. They're meeting Joel Sartore for top photo tips then celebrating at an exciting gala event! Twenty honorable mentions are also receiving National Geographic goody bags. Take a look at all the exciting entries on:

www.seethebiggerpicture.org

5 Smart Toys

The Science Behind This Season's Coolest Toys

BY KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI

1

It's no surprise that this year's hottest toys use the latest supercool technology. But they also tap into your own senses and smarts to create cutting-edge fun. "They provide new ways for kids to see and touch their world," says Reyne Rice of the Toy Industry Association. Check out these five toys and the science that makes them so smart.



THE TOY

Candy Jewel Factory

WHAT IT IS

A miniature oven that bakes jewelry you can wear and eat

COOL SCIENCE

Energy conversion

HOW IT WORKS

Pour candy chips into a jewelry mold and place the mold in the toy oven, which has a lightbulb inside. When the bulb is on, the oven's electrical energy converts into light and heat. Think of a toaster: The coil glows, but it's the heat that browns the bread. In the jewelry oven, the heat produced by the lightbulb is intense enough to melt the candy chips to make edible baubles.

2

THE TOY

EyeClops NightVision goggles

WHAT THEY ARE

Goggles that let you see in the dark

COOL SCIENCE

Infrared light

HOW THEY WORK

These goggles shoot out invisible infrared light beams, the same kind your remote control uses to turn on the television. The beams hit any object within 50 feet, collect information about what they hit, and bounce back to a special sensor in the goggles. The sensor converts that information into the image you see through the lenses.



THE TOY

Rubik's TouchCube

WHAT IT IS

A Rubik's Cube that moves by swiping your finger across the squares instead of twisting them

COOL SCIENCE

Touch sensors

HOW IT WORKS

Like an iPhone, each square on the Rubik's TouchCube has touch sensors that detect where your fingers are and where you slide each block. The sensors send that information to a microchip, which decides how to change the color based on where you've dragged the block.

3



MARK THIESSEN / NDS STAFF (GURL, HANCO, GOGGLES, PRIME-4); COURTESY OF JAWA PACIFIC NIGHT VISION IMAGE; TECHNO SOURCE (RUBIK'S CUBE); COURTESY MATTEL, INC. (MINDFLEX); BLAKE THORNTON (ART)

4

THE TOY

Prime-8

WHAT IT IS

Remote-control interactive gorilla robot

COOL SCIENCE

Biomorphic robotics

HOW IT WORKS

Prime-8 zips around by running on its two spinning spiral arms: When one arm is in the air, the other is on the ground. Instead of using control sensors to balance on its arms, Prime-8 uses biomorphic robotics, which imitates the way animals move. Prime-8's designers took inspiration from a cockroach, whose short, flexible legs adapt quickly to changing surfaces. And like an insect, Prime-8 is low to the ground.



5

THE TOY

Mindflex

WHAT IT IS

A game that moves a foam ball up and down with the power of your mind

COOL SCIENCE

Brain waves

HOW IT WORKS

Anytime you have a thought, your brain cells send signals to each other through a particular pattern of brain waves. The Mindflex headset reads these brain waves and sends a signal to power a fan. As you concentrate more, the fan moves faster, lifting the ball into the air. Concentrate less, and the ball drifts down. A hand-operated dial moves the ball sideways to help you complete an obstacle course.



OLD-SCHOOL COOL

Crayons and LEGOs may seem like old-school fun. But when they first came out, they were the latest in techie toys. Match up these smart toys of the past to the year they were introduced.

1. LEGO bricks
2. Crayola crayons
3. Transformers
4. Easy-Bake Oven
5. View-Master 3D viewer

- A. 1903
- B. 1939
- C. 1958
- D. 1963
- E. 1984

ANSWERS: 1. C, 2. A, 3. E, 4. D, 5. B

CANADA LYNX:

THE
COMEBACK
CAT



THESE WILD CATS ARE BACK ON THE PROWL IN COLORADO.

BY CRISPIN BOYER

It seems an impossible mission: to pinpoint a hidden den of newborn Canada lynx kittens. But researchers from the Colorado Division of Wildlife know they are close.

With the help of a pilot circling high above the snowy wilderness in a small plane, the team tracks a mother cat to a remote spot. But heavy snow blankets all the likely hiding places for a den, such as fallen logs and piled-up rocks.

For lynx researcher Tanya Shenk, snowshoeing through the wilderness in search of a litter is an urgent quest. No lynx kittens have been seen in Colorado for two years, which could mean there's no hope for the lynx's survival in the state.

Humans wiped out the Canada lynx from this part of its range in the 1970s. But a decade ago, the state began a project to capture more than 200 lynx in Canada and Alaska and set them loose in Colorado. These relocated lynx seemed to thrive, producing more kittens each year.

Now wildlife officials aren't certain why new litters haven't been born recently. They need to find an answer to help make sure these wild cats continue their Colorado comeback.

DINNER

RUN

Researchers speculate that a crash in the Colorado snowshoe hare population may have led to the temporary decline in lynx. The cat's existence is intertwined with the survival of the snowshoe hare, the lynx's primary food source. "The lynx is one of the pickiest eaters on the planet," says L. Scott Mills, a snowshoe hare expert. "Up to 90 percent of their diet is hares."

The predator-prey relationship between these two animals is one of nature's best balancing acts. The Canada lynx—with its razor-sharp retractable claws and powerful hind legs built for pouncing—is so supremely adapted for hunting hares that it eats little else. When the snowshoe hares thrive, so do the lynx.

But about every decade, hare numbers nosedive. As a result, the number of lynx drops due to starvation. Eventually, when the hare population rebounds, and prey is once again plentiful, the cats recover as well.

FAST FACT
LYNX USUALLY
HUNT ALONE
AND AT NIGHT.



FAST FACT
LARGE, FURRY PAWS ACT LIKE SNOWSHOES
TO HELP KEEP THE CANADA LYNX FROM
SINKING INTO DEEP SNOW.

COLORADO

KITTENS

At last Shenk and her colleagues discover the den they're looking for. The mother lynx growls as she eyes the researchers through snow-covered brush. She watches warily as the humans weigh her two kittens and tag them with microchips before returning them gently to their den. These newborns are grandkittens of the cats relocated from Canada. Together with eight other kittens researchers find, they are a sign of hope. By tracking their movements, scientists can ensure that the wild cats' reintroduction continues successfully.

They were stoked to finally find litters again. "We're now into our third generation of cats," says Shenk. "These are fully functioning lynx, meaning they're born here, they hunt here, and they're having offspring of their own."



BOBCAT: LYNX LOOK-ALIKE

THIS BOBCAT, WITH ITS STUBBY TAIL AND STOPEPED APPEARANCE, IS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE CANADA LYNX (BIG PICTURE). HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE.



■ LYNX HAVE THICKER COATS, LONGER EAR TUFTS, AND SCRUFFIER CHIN FUR.

■ THE TIP OF A LYNX'S TAIL IS SOLID BLACK; A BOBCAT'S TAIL IS WHITE UNDERNEATH.

■ THE LYNX PROWLs FOR SNOWSHOE HARES, WHILE THE LESS PICKY BOBCAT HUNTS FOR ANYTHING IT CAN CATCH.

■ LYNX PAWS ARE FURRIER AND LARGER, BUILT FOR SNOWY HABITATS.

FAST FACT

CANADA LYNX LIVE IN CANADA BUT ALSO LIVE IN SEVERAL NORTHERN U.S. STATES. THEY ARE THREATENED IN PLACES WHERE HUMAN ACTIVITIES INTRUDE ON LYNX HABITAT.

The Truth
Behind the
New Movie

The PRINCESS and the FROG

BY SARAH WASSNER FLYNN

In the new movie *The Princess and the Frog*, a prince-turned-frog named Naveen mistakes Tiana for a princess.

When he convinces her to give him a kiss to turn him human again, the spell backfires and transforms Tiana into a frog, too! Now they must travel through New Orleans and the Louisiana bayou to break the spell. Here's a peek at how the swampy stars stack up against the real-life animals.

Sticky Situation

Girly Tiana is grossed out when she discovers her froggy self covered in goo. But Naveen informs her that it's just mucus, something all frogs secrete. Jack Cover of the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, says the slimy stuff helps keep frogs' skin moist when they're out of the water. The slippery mucus also can help frogs escape from predators such as raccoons.

Toothy Truth

Just because Prince Naveen has morphed into an amphibian doesn't mean he's lost his royal charm. Or his killer smile, which he flashes with bright white teeth as he talks Tiana into kissing him. Frogs do have teeth, but they're tiny, says Rick Dietz of the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans, Louisiana. They're used only for gripping food, and a large frog like Naveen probably would swallow his meals whole, anyway.



Frog Friends?

At first, Tiana and Naveen aren't too crazy about each other, but they soon become BFFs (Best Frogs Forever). In the wild, though, different species of frogs would not hang out together. For instance, bullfrogs tend to live by the banks of rivers, ponds, and streams, while tree frogs live, well, in trees. If they *did* hop into one another? The bigger bullfrog—which munches on mice, bugs, and fish—would likely see a tree frog as lunch.



Hey, Y'all!

Southern Louisiana is known for its distinctive style of speech. Many of the words and phrases come from the languages of the Native American, African, and French people who settled the area.

BAYOU (BY-oo): a swampy, slow-moving body of water

"LAISSEZ LES BONS TEMPS ROULER!" (LEH-say lay bohn tahn roo-LAY): "Let the good times roll!"

JAMBALAYA (juh-m-buh-LIE-yuh): a rice dish with any combination of beef, pork, fowl, sausage, or seafood, as well as celery, green peppers, and tomatoes

ZYDECO (ZI-duh-koh): music that combines traditional French and Caribbean tunes with the blues. It often features instruments such as guitars, washboards, and accordions.

BEIGNET (ben-YAY): French-style fried dough covered in powdered sugar



Guiding Light

Tiana and Naveen need help navigating the dark bayou. So Ray the firefly calls upon his relatives—all 30,000 of them—to create a giant flashlight. Real fireflies may appear to be in groups, but they're actually traveling alone, says insect expert Cole Gilbert of Cornell University in New York. And fireflies use their glowing parts to attract potential mates, not as night-lights.

The character Louis was inspired by many jazz musicians, including trumpeter Louis Armstrong. He was a native of New Orleans who helped make jazz music popular in the early 1900s.



Tail Speed

Louis the alligator lends a helping, uh, tail so Tiana and Naveen can cross the wide Mississippi River. Using his tail like a motor, Louis scoots from bank to bank. Real alligators also use their tails to propel them through the water, Dietz says. The tails are so powerful that gators can swim in short bursts nearly twice as fast as an Olympic swimmer.

IT'S HARD TO
BELIEVE WHEN
I WAS A LITTLE
KID, MY BROTHER
ZANDY WAS
AGE-1 WAS JUST
FIVE INCHES TALLER
THAN HE IS NOW.

Big Deal

What it's like
to be the tallest
kid in the world

BY BRENDEN ADAMS
AS TOLD TO RACHEL BUCHHOLZ

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
KARINE AIGNER

MY LIFE SO FAR...

At birth, I weighed 7 pounds 3 ounces. That's about what most babies weigh.

At 6 months, I had 8 teeth. Most babies that age are just cutting their first teeth.

At 5 years old, I was about as tall as you probably are.

Continued

I know what you're probably thinking.

Do you play basketball?

Yeah, I shoot some hoops. But I can't play on my school team because my joints are so big that I'm not able to run much.

When did you graduate from high school?

I'm nowhere near old enough to graduate from high school, even though I look it—I'm just 14 and still in middle school.

OK. So how tall are you?

My height? About seven feet five inches. That's almost as big as the tallest NBA athlete in history.

It's OK when people ask me these questions—I'm used to it. Since I was 4 years old I've been about twice as tall as other kids my age. But once people get to know me, they see that I'm just like them, except for one thing: I'm most likely the tallest kid in the world.

ONE OF A KIND

It's hard to explain my condition, but here goes: You have these things in your body called chromosomes, and they contain genes. Genes determine everything about you, like hair color, eye color, and height. Before I was born, one of my chromosomes broke into pieces. Those pieces got all mixed up before reattaching to each other, and that messed with the gene that controls my growth. So I just kept getting taller.

I never really thought I was different from anyone, except that I was bigger. I'm not even sure I knew how tall I was until I started hitting my head on door frames and ceilings!

Being tall definitely has its advantages. I can get things from high places where most people have to use a stool. (My mom *loves* taking me to the grocery store.) I never have to worry about anyone blocking my view. And no one ever messes with me, at least to my face. After all, I think it might be a little scary to make fun of someone so much bigger than you.

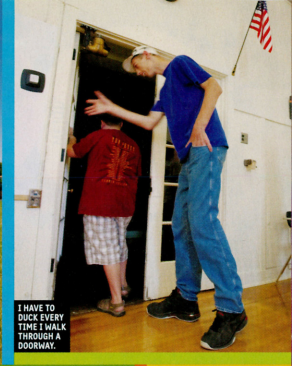
Brenden wants to hear from you!

Send him a letter to tell him what you think about his story.

NG KIDS / Brenden Adams, P.O. Box 97056, Washington, DC 20090-7056



I'M NOT "THAT TALL KID" TO MY MY FRIENDS, REECE BULL (LEFT) AND ADAM STRICKLAND. I'M JUST BRENDEN.



I HAVE TO DUCK EVERY TIME I WALK THROUGH A DOORWAY.

At 7 years old, I was as tall as a short adult.

Then again, I know there are kids who say things about me behind my back. And when I hear about it, I ask them to stop. You have to stand up for yourself. If you don't, it'll just keep happening.

NO PROBLEM

My height sometimes does make things hard for me.

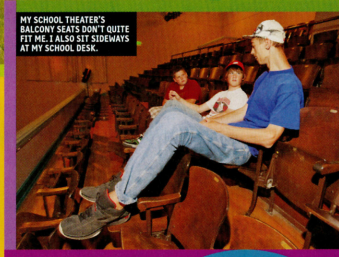
That's one thing people don't always get. But when I come up against a challenge, I'll just find a different way to do it. Because there's one thing about me: I never give up.

For instance, I used to sleep diagonally in a regular-size bed—and

my feet still hung off the side. So I designed my own bed that's about a foot longer than a normal one.

It's also higher so I can get in and out of it easier. Most clothes

don't fit me, so now I'm an expert at Internet shopping. (Except when pro basketball players



MY SCHOOL THEATER'S BALCONY SEATS DON'T QUITE FIT ME. I ALSO SIT SIDEWAYS AT MY SCHOOL DESK.

help me out—Shaquille O'Neal gave me a pair of Shaq-size sneakers.) And instead of being crunched up in the back of my mom's SUV, I'll fold down the second-row seats, sit in the third row, and stretch out my legs.

I'm even rebuilding a car with my dad for when I can drive in a couple years. I'm going to take out the driver's seat and bolt it where the back seat is so my knees won't be up against my chin. The best part is that it has an open top. So my head will just stick out of the roof!

NICE VIEW

Do I wish things were different? Sometimes. Sure. There are times when I wish I were the

same size as everyone else. But I'm not. I'm just who I am, and that's good enough for me.

One thing that helps is my friends. When I was younger, sometimes kids on the bus refused to sit with me. But the kids who knew me would jump up and say, "I'll sit with Brenden—he's cool!" And that made me feel good.

My mom says she thinks I was born with something inside me that makes me stay positive and see the good in things. I just don't think there's a point in seeing the bad. Everybody's got something different about them. It's what you do with those differences that makes you who you are.

Of course, the thing that

makes me different—my height—also means that I get some interesting chores, like cleaning our skylight. But I told my mom we'd have to go to the hardware store before I got started, because I'd need a ladder.

Me on a ladder? That'll be a first.

My height sometimes does make things hard for me. But when I come up against a challenge, I'll just find a different way to do it.

Fun Stuff

games, laughs, and lots to do!



Paradise Lost

The Sandorsun family wants to get away from the wintry weather and is heading to the Caribbean this holiday season. But on the way to the airport, everything fell off their roof rack. Find 15 items in the scene that the Sandorsuns had packed for vacation.

ANSWERS ON PAGE 34

Family Project

Make and Bake Ornaments

Ask for a parent's help before getting started.

Liven up the holidays with these easy-to-make decorations.

YOU WILL NEED

- 4 CUPS FLOUR
- 1 CUP SALT
- 1½ CUPS WATER
- LARGE BOWL
- ROLLING PIN
- COOKIE CUTTERS (OPTIONAL)
- PLASTIC STRAW
- ALUMINUM FOIL
- COOKIE SHEET
- CRAFT GLUE
- WATER-BASED PAINT
- DECORATIONS SUCH AS GOOGLY EYES, STICKERS, GLITTER
- RIBBONS OR PIPE CLEANERS

WHAT TO DO

Preheat oven to 300°F. Stir the flour, salt, and water together in the bowl and knead with your hands until the dough is smooth. Roll and flatten the mixture until it's about a half-inch thick. Using cookie cutters or your hands, shape into different designs. Punch a hole in the top of each ornament with a plastic straw. Bake on a foil-covered cookie sheet for one hour. Cool completely before decorating. Thread a ribbon or pipe cleaner through the hole and hang your creations.

CREATE HAIR BY SQUEEZING DOUGH THROUGH A GARLIC PRESS.

MAKING DOUGH FROM SALT AND FLOUR DATES BACK TO THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS.



What in the World?

Play interactive "What in the World?" and other games online.
kids.nationalgeographic.com



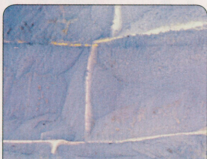
CHILL OUT

These photographs show close-up and faraway views of things you may see in cold weather. Unscramble the letters to identify what's in each picture. Freezing up?

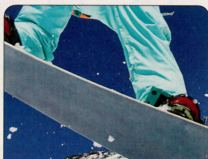
ANSWERS ON PAGE 34



THO OCELAHTOC



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NAWEOBRSORD



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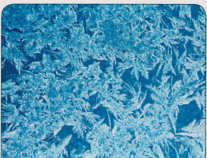
ENEDIRER



OSVGEL



AROLP ERBA
WAP



TRFOS



CEI-ERTSKSA

Funny Fill-In

Fast and "Flurry-ous"

BY JILL YAWORSKI

Ask a friend to give you words to fill in the blanks in this story without showing it to him or her. Then read out loud for a laugh.



SCHOOL'S OUT

I couldn't believe it when _____ announced school was being let out early because _____
teacher's name
 _____ feet of _____ had _____ from the sky. " _____!" my
large number plural noun past-tense verb exclamation
 classmates and I yelled. We put on our warmest _____ and trekked out into the minus
article of clothing, plural
 _____-degree blizzard. But soon we realized the sidewalks were completely covered with
another large number
 _____. I looked around and saw my friends _____ and _____ at
something slippery verb ending in -ing verb ending in -ing
 the top of the hill we were on. How would we get to the bottom? That's when I had an idea. I grabbed my
 _____ book and _____ sat on top of it. The next thing I knew, I was riding the
school subject adverb ending in -ly
 book like a(n) _____ down the hill. Everyone cheered as I _____ past them.
something you ride past-tense verb
 I would be home in no time! Suddenly, a snowdrift as tall as the _____ appeared in front of
famous landmark
 me. I took a deep breath and _____ over the snowbank, landing _____ like
past-tense verb adverb ending in -ly
 a professional _____. Who knew _____ could be so much fun?
kind of athlete same school subject as above



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*Children of NGS staff and contractors are not eligible to participate. Only those selected will be notified. If you are already a member of the panel, you do not need to reapply.



It's Spider-Man

TO THE RESCUE!



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